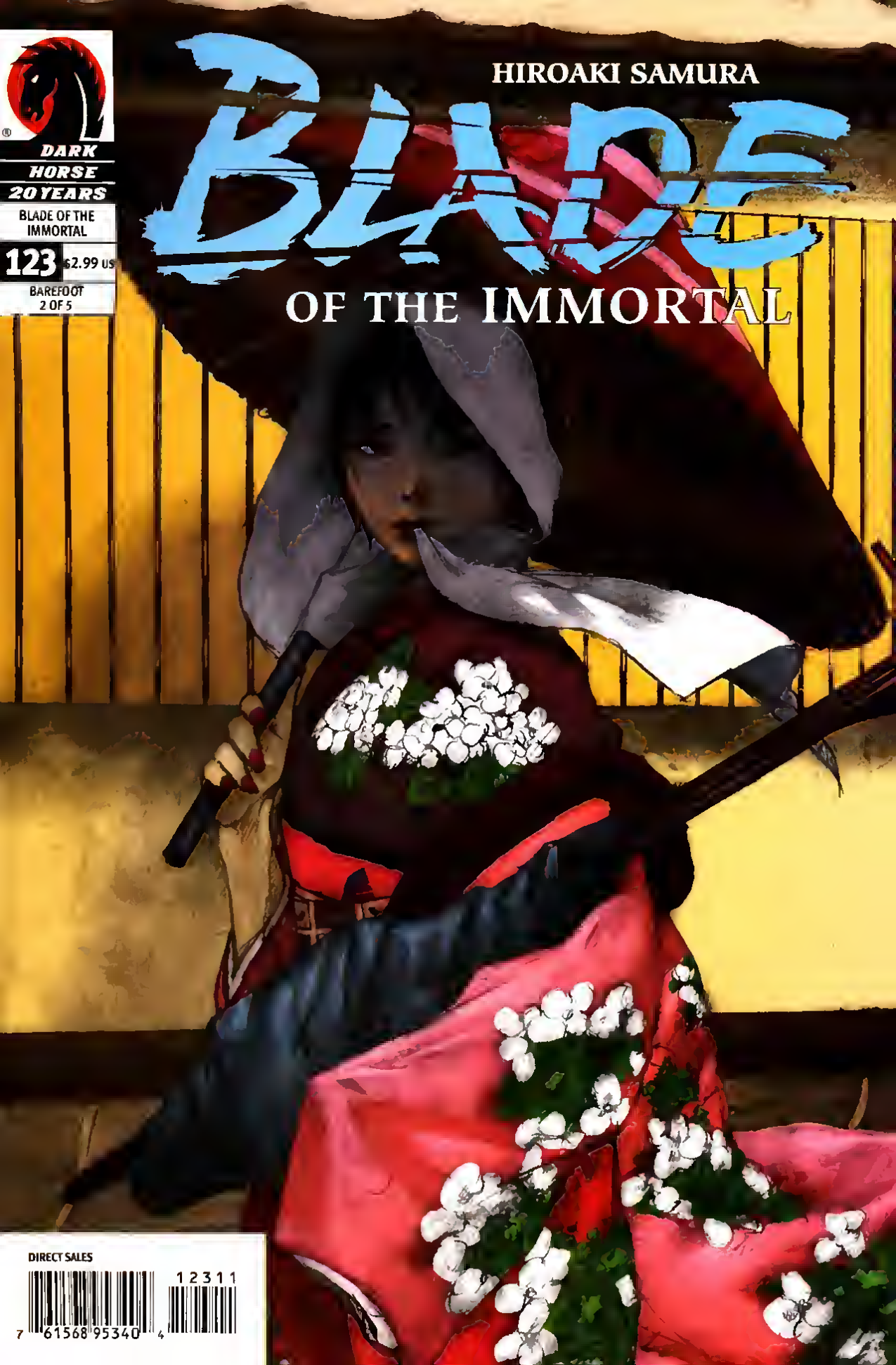

DARK HORSE 20 YEARS
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
123
$2.99 US
BAREFOOT 2 OF 5
HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL
DIRECT SALES
12311
7 61568 95340 4

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by **DANA LEWIS**
lettering and retouch by **TOMOKO SAITO**
cover colors by **DAN JACKSON**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* which was destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashira*, serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

DŌA

Dōa, an Ittō-*ryū* warrior, is slowly befriending Rin, with neither of them knowing their real connection.

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted bodyguard and member of the Ittō-*ryū*.

BURANDO

Deranged doctor and pioneer in *kessen-chu* transference.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's "immortality experiments." Burando, one of Edo's best surgeons, finds inspiration after being returned to prison, and he's desperate to return to his work. Separated from both Manji and Isaku, Rin acts on a tip from Gilchi to spy on Kagimura and Edo Castle. Dōa has other plans . . .

designer **SCOTT COOK** editorial assistant **RYAN JORGENSEN**
editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

www.darkhorse.com • Advertising Sales: (503) 905-2370
To find a comics shop near you, call the Comic Shop Locator Service at 1-888-266-4226

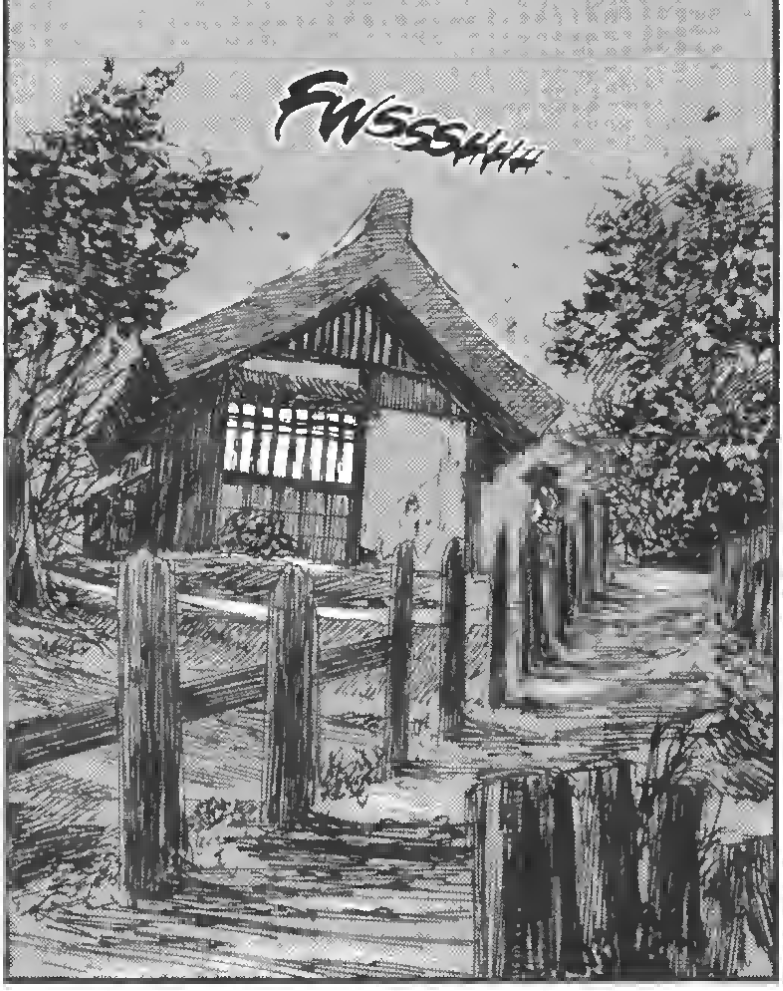
Blade of the Immortal #123 March 2007 Published by Dark Horse Comics Inc., 10956 SE Main Street Milwaukie, OR 97222 Blade of the Immortal © 2007 by Hiroaki Samura All rights reserved. First published in Japan in 2004 by Kodansha Ltd., Tokyo English translation rights arranged through Kodansha Ltd. New and adapted artwork and text copyright © 2007 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All other material unless otherwise specified copyright © 2007 Dark Horse Comics Inc Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse logo are trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc., registered in various categories and countries. All rights reserved No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the express written permission of Dark Horse Comics, Inc Names characters, places and incidents featured in this publication either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead) events institutions, or locales, without satiric intent is coincidental PRINTED IN CANADA

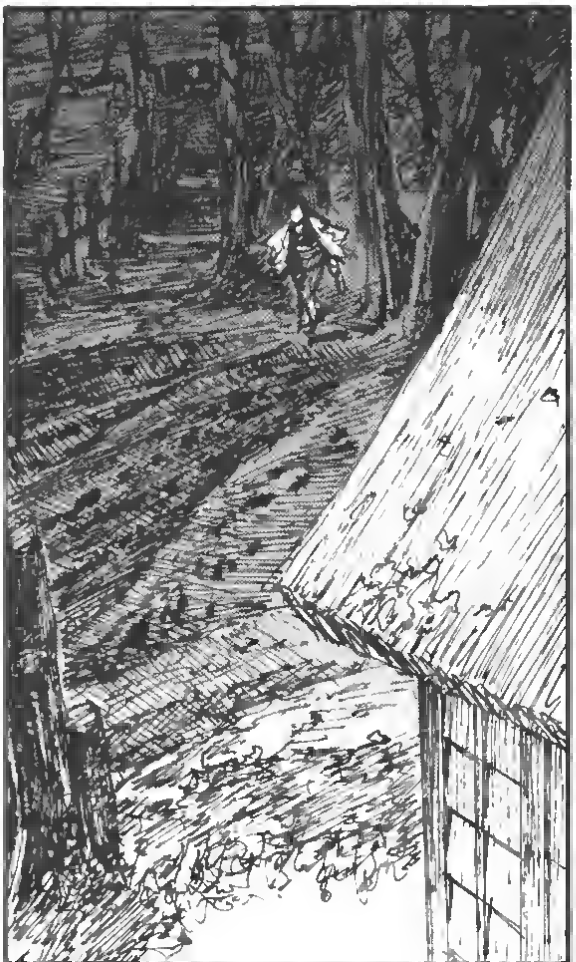
無限の住人

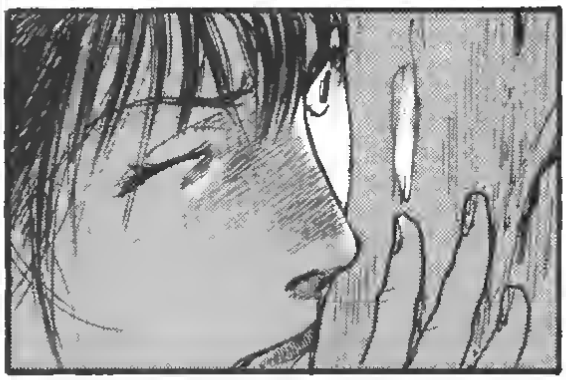
BAREFOOT

-part two-

Fuuuuoooo
FIVE DAYS TAILING HABAKI KAGI-MURA...
...AND FOR THE FIRST TIME...
...THE VERY FIRST TIME...
A DESOLATE PLACE LIKE THIS...?
...HE'S NOT GOING HOME.
AT LAST, AT LAST, AT LAST!
I'VE SNIFFED YOU OUT!


FWSSSHH





A... WOMAN?
JUST ONE...
...NO... NO, TWO...
...TALK-ING ABOUT... WHAT?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
DARN WIND. CAN'T MAKE IT OUT...
AH?
BAD--!!
KCHAK
SLASH

FWSSHH!
WHAT'S WRONG?
MM...? NO-THING.
GIMME A BREAK!
A MIS-TRESS...?

FWAPP!
GIVE ME A BREAK!!
READ THIS?! THIS WORTH-LESS CRAP?!

D-DOCTOR.
CALM YOUR-SELF.
TORA-EMON...

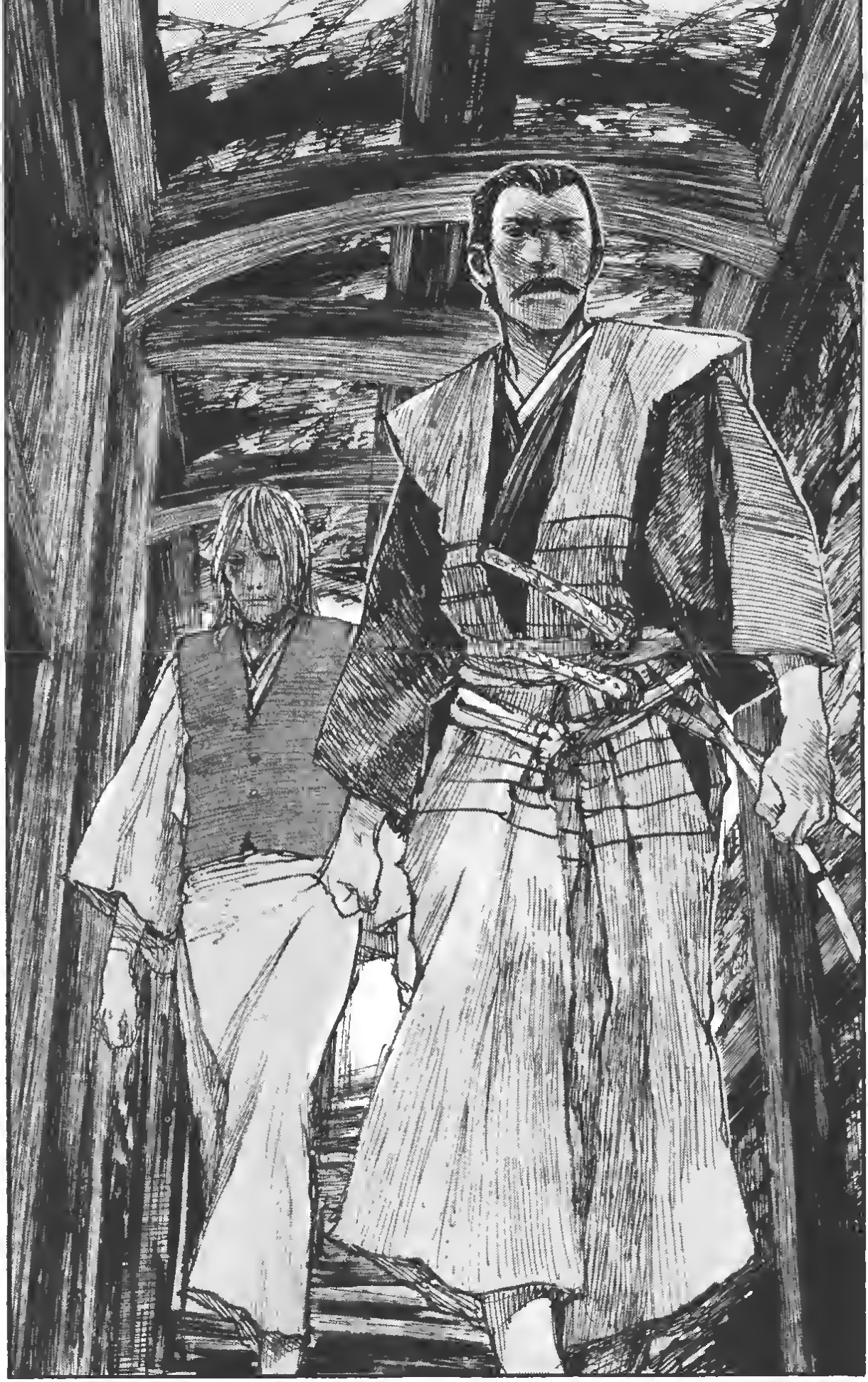
...WAS IT?

.....
.....
.....
=phew=

OKAY. FINE...
...I SAW FOR MYSELF.

HIS BODY'S NOT NORMAL. IMMORTAL? I CAN'T SAY... BUT... NOT NORMAL.
I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
BUT WHAT ABOUT IT?!
WHAT THE HELL CAN I DO?!
MŌZEN! AYAME BURANDO! FOUR HŌGAN AND HŌIN!
THEY ALL FAILED!
YES, BUT WE THINK YOU--
DON'T YOU MESS WITH ME! IT'S A PLOT!
HE'S PURGING ANY DOCTOR HE DOESN'T LIKE! PROMOTING HIS PAWNS!

THIS "SURGERY"...?
IN-SANE! FROM DAY ONE!
I'M OUTTA HERE!
EH...?!
WAI--!
SENSEI, WAIT!
AT LEAST UNTIL HABAKI-DONO--!
STUFF IT!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS CRAP! WHEN HABAKI-DONO GETS HERE, YOU TELL HIM THAT.
I DON'T CARE! GOOD RID-DANCE!
ERP?
HA-HABAKI...!



BURANDO-
DONO?
EH?
HIM?

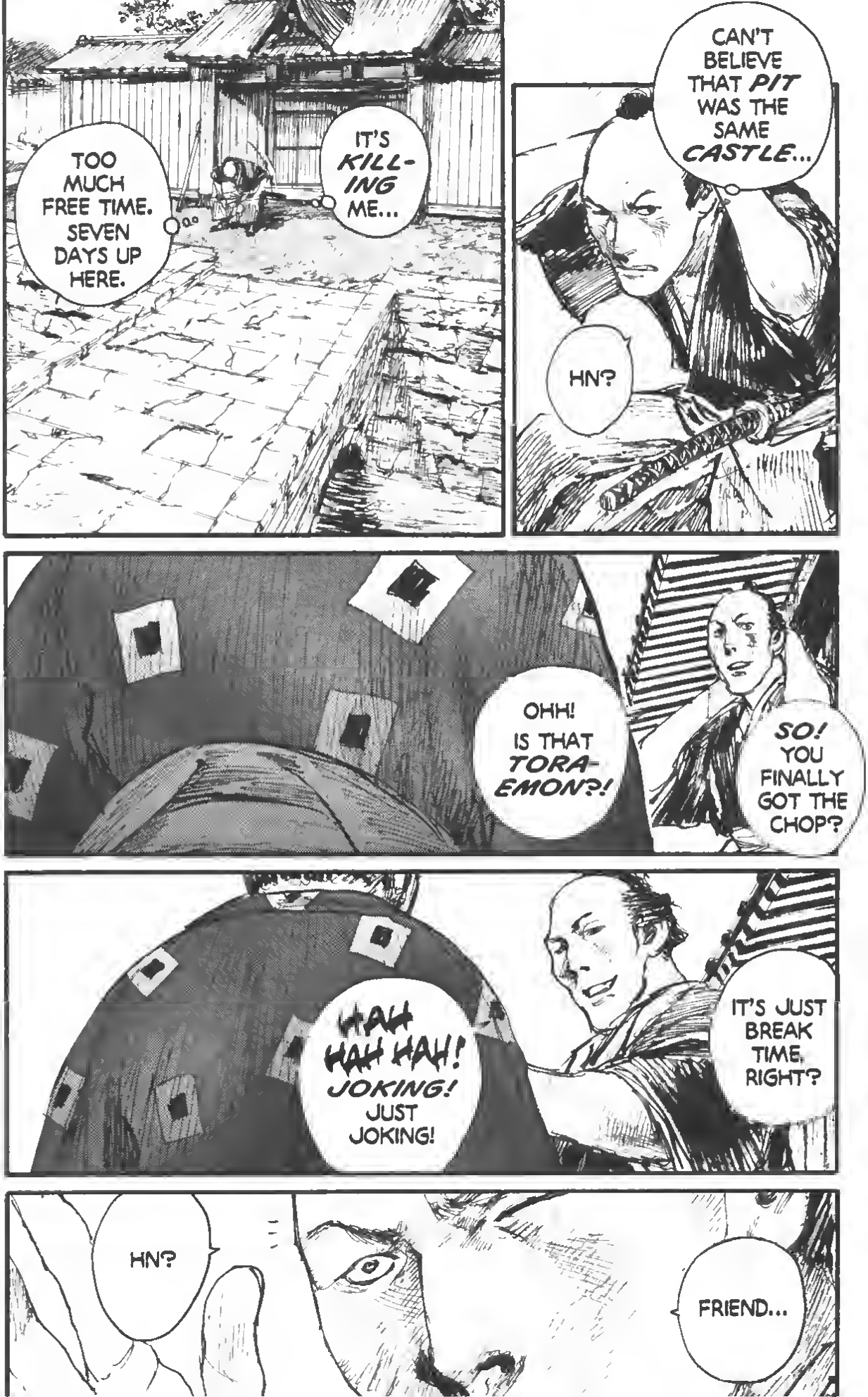
!

...YO...

...TORA-
EMON...
BEEN
AGES.

THEY PARDONED YOU! THANK GOD!
YES, YES...
BURANDO-DONO! IT IS YOU!
IT'S BEEN SO AWFUL SINCE YOU LEFT!
....
THE DOCTORS THEY BROUGHT IN!
CHARLATANS! ALL OF THEM!
NO TECHNIQUE, NOTHING.
YES?
YOU'RE EXCUSED.
....

OH, SIR! LET'S GIVE IT OUR BEST!
BURANDO-DONO!
THREE DAYS LATER...
AARGH...
phewww...


TOO MUCH FREE TIME. SEVEN DAYS UP HERE.
IT'S KILL-ING ME...
CAN'T BELIEVE THAT PIT WAS THE SAME CASTLE...
HN?
OHH! IS THAT TORA-EMON?!
SO! YOU FINALLY GOT THE CHOP?
HAH HAH HAH! JOKING! JUST JOKING!
IT'S JUST BREAK TIME, RIGHT?
HN?
FRIEND...

...WHAT'S *WRONG*? YOU LOOK *AWFUL*?
...DO I?
OH. KARU-KOZAWA-*SAN*. EH? AWFUL?
WELL, UH... NOT *SURPRIS-ING!*
ALL THOSE *QUACKS*...? SICKENS THE *HEART* MORE'N THE *BODY*.
AND *SO*? WHAT KIND OF DOC IS IT NOW...?
ACTUAL-LY, IT'S...
WHAT?!
BURANDO-*DONO'S* BACK?!

I SEE, I SEE! THAT'S GREAT!
THUD!
GREAT?
EVEN A LAYMAN LIKE ME COULD SEE HE HAD THE SUREST HANDS.
AND NATURALLY, THE OTHER SAWBONES FRETTED ABOUT THEIR STATUS...
...WHILE HE HAD NOTHING TO LOSE.
KAGIMURA-DONO SPOKE HARSHLY...BUT HE'S THE BEST, ANY WAY YOU CUT IT!
MAYBE THAT LIGHT-NESS OF BEING...
...WAS THE SOURCE OF HIS BOLD-NESS?
TRUE, AT THE START, HE WAS TOO BOLD...
...EVEN CRUEL...
...BUT REMEMBER HIS PARTING WORDS?

"PEOPLE ARE NOT OTTERS!"
AH, THOSE WORDS. STRUCK ME TO THE HEART!
I THOUGHT, HERE'S A DOCTOR WHO VALUES LIFE...
HN?
OT- OT- OTTERS...
HRGK HRK
TORA-EMON. YOU OKAY?
WHOA!
WEEK!!

K-KARU-KOZAWA-SAN...
THE... MAN YOU REMIND ME OF...
...AND THE MAN... DOWN THERE...
...TRULY... THEY'RE DIFFERENT PEOPLE!
HE... THAT MAN... HAS CHANGED...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND... W-WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM...?!
THAT'S IT FOR TODAY.

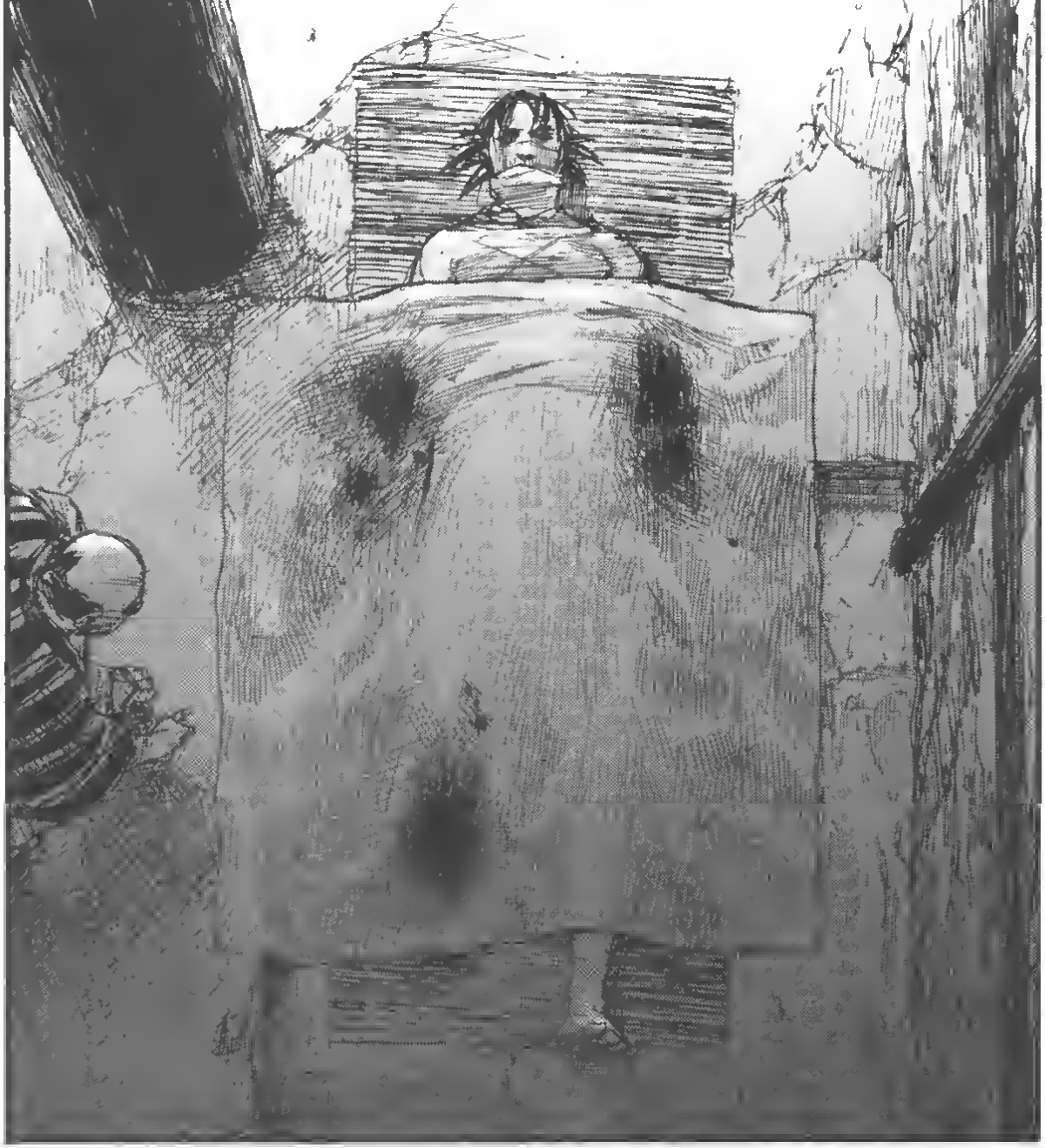
FOUR...
...DEAD!!
TELL HABAKI-DONO I WANT MORE...
SECONDS, ANYBODY?!

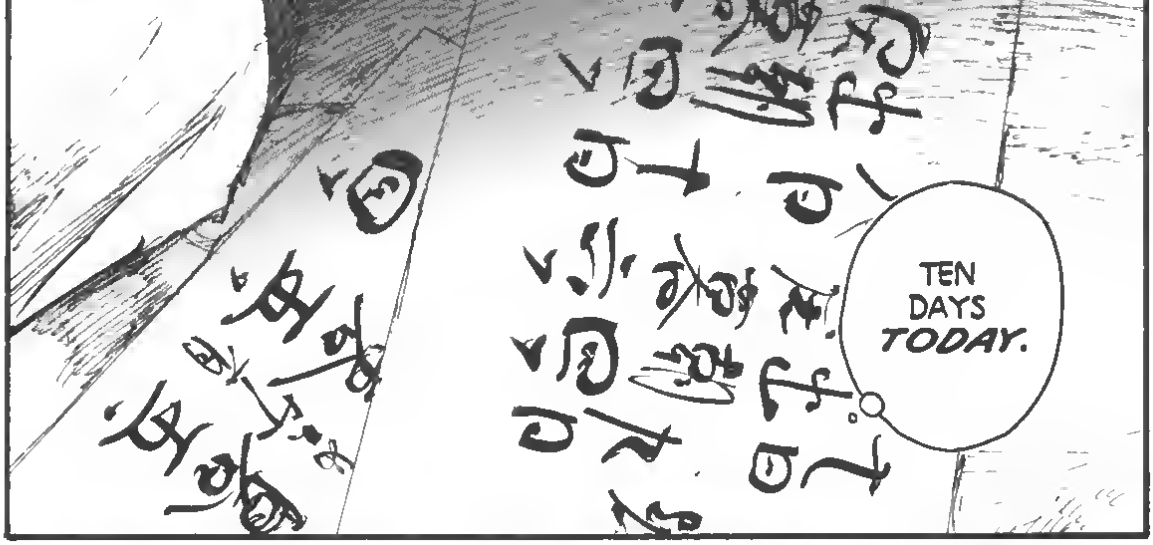
HRFF!
SSSSSLLE!
WHAT'S WRONG, TORA-EMON?
CAN'T STAND THE SMELL?
FOR *SHAME*. HAVE TO GET USED TO IT. OR... IS *THAT* IT?
TO YOUR EYES THEY STILL LOOK...
...*HUMAN*?
.....
.....
.....
TUT. HAVE TO BOTHER HABAKI *AGAIN*.

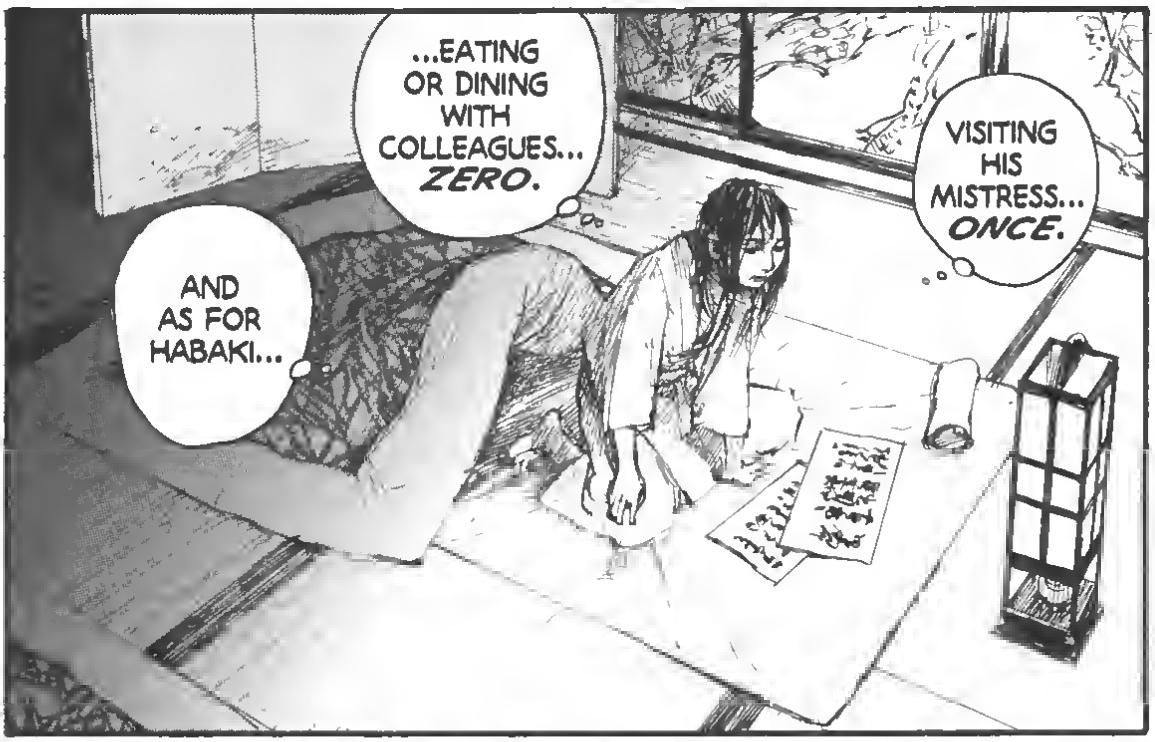
TWO DAYS LATER...
TORAEMON! BEHOLD!
OTTER HOODS!
AH HAH HAH HAH! NOT BAD, HUH?
IF YOU CAN'T TELL 'EM APART, WHO CARES IF THEY LIVE OR DIE...

YOU'LL BE *FINE* NOW? RIGHT?
WELL, ISN'T IT *BRACING* TO HAVE OUR BOY BURANDO BACK...
.....
.....
...HUH? YOUNG HABAKI?
PERKS ME UP JUST *WATCHING* HIM!
.....
.....
BRAC- ING, HMM...?

G-RAAK
TORA-EMON!
MANJI'S LEG!




TEN DAYS *TODAY.*


...EATING OR DINING WITH COLLEAGUES... *ZERO.*
VISITING HIS MISTRESS... *ONCE.*
AND AS FOR HABAKI...

NO CAN DO...
AND THAT SHABBY *WHORE-HOUSE...?*
HIDE A BIG DUDE THERE FOR *MONTHS?*

I DON'T GET IT!!
SLEEESH!
FWOOP
I JUST DON'T! FOR THE LIFE OF ME!
TAILING AND TAILING HIM! FOR WHAT?!
ALL I KNOW IS, HABAKI GETS HOME...
... LATE NIGHT. EARLY EVENING. DIFFERENT TIMES...
.....
.....
.....
...COULD IT BE...
HE'S MEETING MANJI IN...?

TALK THINK THAN
DŌA...?
.....
.....
.....

...DŌA.
THERE, THERE...
...WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? YOU'RE FILTHY.
:sniff:

I SEE... SO YOU NEVER SAW...
...YOUR OLD MAN?
AND THEN... THEN COMING BACK...
...THOSE COPS AGAIN. I GOT AWAY, BUT...
SPLSH
...MORE OF 'EM. AROUND HERE...
AND THAT'S WHY YOU STAYED AWAY?
TEN DAYS?! IN THIS WEA-THER?!
.....
.....
.....
YOU'RE SO TINY, DŌA...

...SO QUICK ON YOUR FEET...
...YOU COULD SHAKE THEM EASY.
IF... ISAKU WAS HERE, I COULD SHAKE THEM...
...KILL ALL OF 'EM, EASY...
...BUT... BUT, ALL ALONE... I DUNNO WHAT TO DO!

ISAKU...
...WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?!
...ISAKU...
TOO STRONG? TOO WEAK...?
YOU MYS-TERIOUS CHILD...
TO BE CONTINUED...!

NEXT MONTH:
BAREFOOT
Part 3 of 5

Yes, they're just otters. Really, Toraemon, just otters. *Blade of the Immortal*'s level of unsettling horror gets kicked up a big notch, with the "new and improved" Doc Burando back in action! In the dark prisons under Edo Castle, Kagimura's evil experiments are accelerated . . . resulting in a dreadfully high body count. While surveying the grounds around Edo castle, Rin and Dōa make a startling, stomach-churning discovery, which throws Dōa into another one of her furious fits of blind rage. Will Rin be able to calm her down before their search-and-recovery mission is blown? Also, issue 124 ends with another amazing Samura cliffhanger! See you next month, when Dōa's Itto-*ryū* teammate and cranky friend Kashin Koji confesses, "The shogun's rheumatism . . . some bureaucrat's hemorrhoids . . . that's all I hear about."

--Philip S

GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū*

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Dōjō: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts, here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dono: Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of a higher rank

Edo: Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo

Hōgan and Hōin: Types of *teni*, shogunate doctors.

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal

Mugai-ryū: A group of criminals who worked as assassins for the shogunate, earning their freedom by killing assigned targets. Disbanded by Habaki Kagimura

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa

Ryū: A sword school

Teni: Doctor to the shogun and his ministers

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

Doa by Hiroaki Samura—from a series of pinups in which he put *Blade of the Immortal* heroines in Chinese dresses. We'll have another bonus Samura pinup next issue!

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222

www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com • philips@darkhorse.com

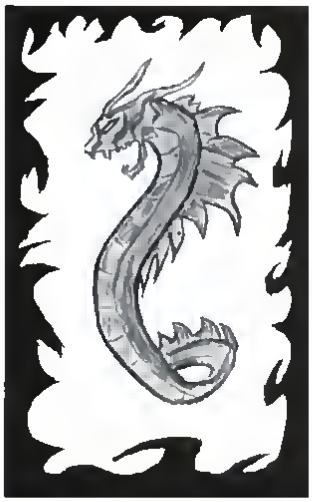
All fan artwork, letters, and e-mails submitted become the property of Dark Horse Comics.
Blade of the Immortal and all related characters and elements are property of
Hiroaki Samura © 2007. All rights reserved.

COVER COLORS BY DAN JACKSON!

Our front cover for this issue is actually a detail from a larger piece—a Hiroaki Samura pinup that ran on the first page of the Japanese *Mugen no Junin*, volume seventeen. Dan Jackson (who's been coloring *Blade of the Immortal* covers for several years) turned in such an amazing job, we decided that the world needed to see ALL of it. Turn the page for Dan's stunning color treatment of Samura's black-and-white pinup. A coloring, lettering, and digital retouch veteran, Dan has worked on numerous Dark Horse books over the years, most recently coloring *Hellgate: London*, *Hellboy Animated: The Black Wedding*, and several *Star Wars* projects. Dan will also be coloring the upcoming *Gremlins* comic book series. Thanks, Mr. Jackson! *Yoroshiku!*

Greek artist Georgia Lata sent a letter and a batch of *Oh My Goddess!* fan art to Dark Horse Manga editor Carl Gustav Horn (she also included some *Trigun* and *Hellsing* drawings). While most of Georgia's work will be printed in volume five of Dark Horse's remastered *Oh My Goddess!* series, here's another piece from Georgia's drawing table which, as she writes, is "an ancient Greek dragon that keeps bad luck away! It's one of Poseidon's guardians. Hope it brings you good luck!" Somewhat superstitious, *Blade of the Immortal* editor Philip Simon decided to run this image to get 2007 off to a great start. (As we work on the contents of this issue, it's early January.)

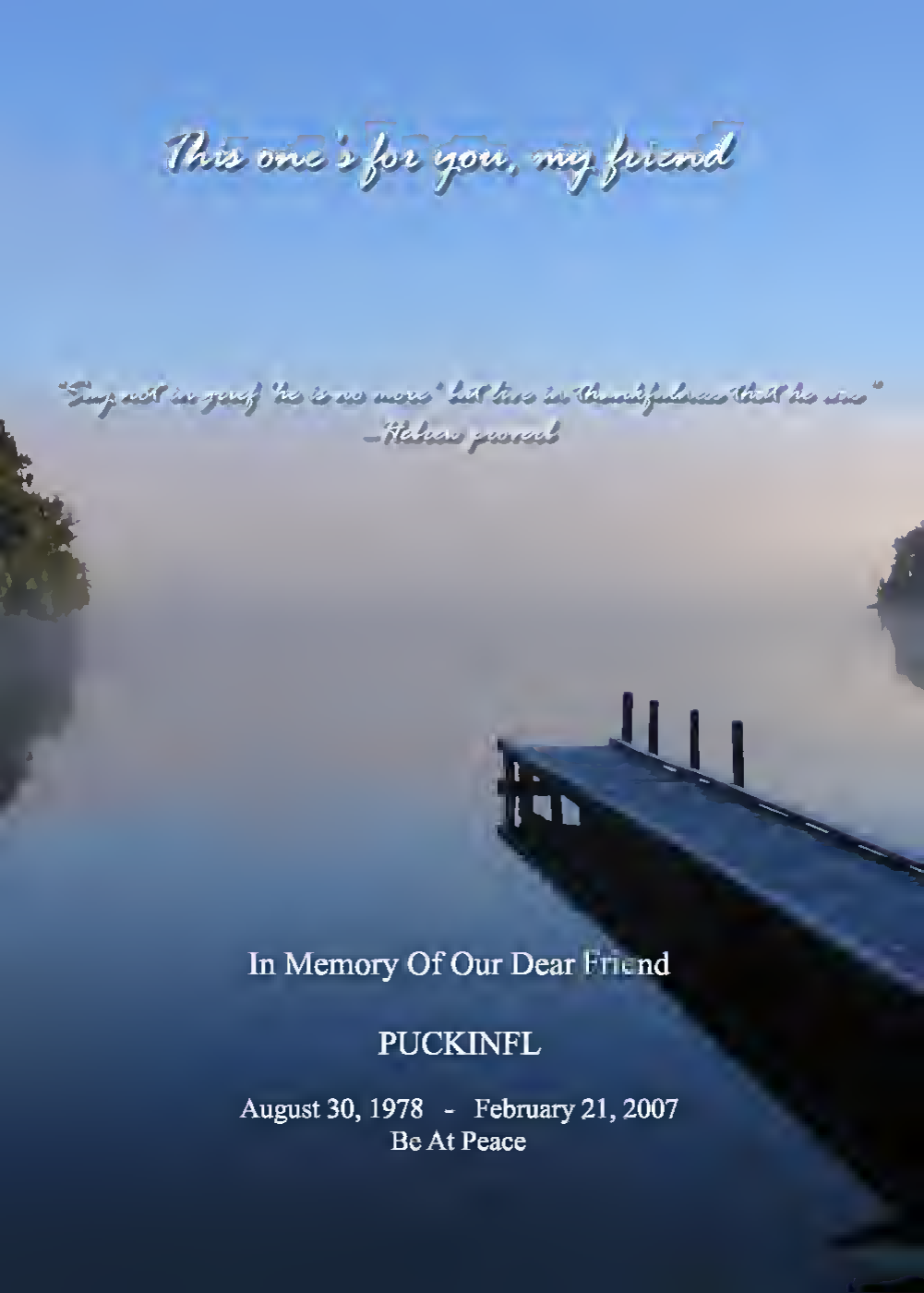
Erick Marquez sent in a pinup of Rin—showing a decidedly different side of Samura's timid knife-thrower. Even though she's growing more confident in her skills and maturing right before our eyes as this epic tale unfolds (and has been known to put kisses on Manji while he sleeps), we haven't seen her quite so . . . engagingly outgoing.



Poseidon's Dragon by Georgia Lata, Patras, Greece.

Rin by Erick Marquez, Shawnee, Kansas.

無限の住人



In Memory Of Our Dear Friend

PUCKINFL

August 30, 1978 - February 21, 2007

Be At Peace

DIGITAL COMICS PRESERVATION
presents
KRYPTONIA
DIGITAL COMICS PRESERVATION presents a scan by KRYPTONIA preserving what's worth preserving LIKE IT? BUY IT! support your favorite books and your LCS
MMVII
PG
POWER GIRL WUZ HERE
DCP